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(54) Title: A PROCESS FOR THE PRODUCTION OF PAPER		
<p>(57) Abstract</p> <p>The invention relates to a process for the production of paper from a suspension of cellulose containing fibres, and optional fillers, which comprises adding a water-soluble cationic or amphoteric branched acrylamide-based polymer and an anionic aluminium-containing silica sol to the suspension and forming and draining the suspension on a wire.</p>		

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A process for the production of paper

The present invention relates to a process for the production of paper and more particularly to a process which comprises adding to papermaking stock a branched acrylamide-based polymer and an aluminium-containing silica sol.

5 It is known in the papermaking art to use drainage and retention aids. Such additives are introduced into the papermaking stock in order to facilitate drainage and/or to increase adsorption of fine particles and additives onto the cellulosic fibres so that they are retained with the fibres. Hereby the productivity in the papermaking process can be considerably increased and the use of drainage and retention aids thus offers substantial
10 economic benefits.

Another important characteristic of the papermaking process is the formation of the paper sheet produced. Formation is determined by the variance in light transmission within a paper sheet, and a low variance indicates a good formation. The formation is affected by several factors, for example the manner in which the fibres are distributed, arranged and
15 mixed within the paper sheet. Good formation is thus aimed at in the papermaking process in order to optimize the optical properties of the paper produced.

Small dosages of drainage and retention aids are generally beneficial to formation. However, even moderate dosages of drainage and retention aids may have an adverse effect on formation. As retention increases to a high level, the formation parameter may decline abruptly from good formation to poor formation. Poor formation give rise to deteriorated paper quality and printability. Increased roughness of the paper surface is a further effect of poor formation which can have a negative impact on subsequent surface treatment such as coating. In addition, the problems of poor formation and hence deteriorated optical properties and printability may not be overcome by coating the paper since the result,
20 normally, will not be as good as that obtained with paper produced under conditions resulting in good formation.

U.S. Pat. Nos. 4,980,025 and 5,368,833 and European Pat. No. 656872 disclose the use of cationic acrylamide-based polymers and aluminium-containing silica sols as stock additives in papermaking. These systems are among the most efficient drainage and
25 retention aids now in use.

According to the present invention it has been found that a combination of beneficial effects in terms of improved formation and very high drainage and retention performance can be obtained when aluminium-containing silica sols are used in conjunction with branched acrylamide-based polymers as stock additives in papermaking. More specifically, the present invention relates to a process for the production of paper from a suspension
35 of cellulose-containing fibres, and optional fillers, which comprises adding to the suspension

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a water-soluble cationic or amphoteric branched acrylamide-based polymer and an anionic aluminium-containing silica sol, forming and draining the suspension on a wire. The invention thus relates to a process as further defined in the claims.

5 In comparison with processes employing the same type of aluminium-containing silica sol but using it in combination with linear acrylamide-based polymers, the process of the present invention renders possible production of a paper with improved formation at corresponding dosages of additives and improved formation at corresponding levels of retention, whereby the quality of the paper web or sheet produced can be improved while retaining the high retention performance.

10 Water-soluble, cationic and amphoteric, branched acrylamide-based polymers which can be used according to the invention are known in the art, for example from European patent application No. 374458 which is hereby incorporated herein by reference. The polymers can be prepared from monomers which are conventional in the preparation of amphoteric and cationic acrylamide-based polymers in combination with at least one
15 branching agent.

Examples of conventionally-used monomers for preparing cationic and amphoteric acrylamide-based polymers include acrylamide and derivatives thereof in combination with at least one ethylenically unsaturated cationic monomer and combinations of ethylenically unsaturated cationic and anionic monomers, respectively, and optional non-ionic monomers.
20 Examples of suitable cationic monomers include diallyldimethylammonium chloride, acryloxy-ethyltrimethylammonium chloride and cationic monomers based on (meth)acrylates and (meth)acrylamides of N,N-dialkylaminoalkyl compounds, e.g. quaternaries and salts thereof.

The branching agent make it possible to impart a branched structure to the acrylamide-based polymer, e.g. by co-polymerization of a monomer mixture including a
25 monomeric branching agent containing ethylenically unsaturated bond(s) and/or by reaction between other types of reactive group(s) present in a branching agent with reactive group(s) present in the acrylamide-based polymer during or after polymerization. Examples of suitable branching agents include compounds having at least two, and preferably two, ethylenically unsaturated bonds; compounds having at least one ethylenically unsaturated bond and at
30 least one reactive group; and compounds having at least two reactive groups. Examples of suitable reactive groups include epoxides, aldehydes, and hydroxyl groups. It is preferred that the branching agent is difunctional, i.e., that there are two groups of the type ethylenically unsaturated bond and/or reactive group present in the branching agent. Preferably the acrylamide-based polymer contains, in polymerized form, at least one ethylenically unsaturated monomer functioning as a branching agent, and more preferably the branching agent
35 has two ethylenically unsaturated bonds.

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Examples of suitable monomeric branching agents containing two ethylenically unsaturated bonds include alkylene bis(meth)acrylamides, e.g. methylene bisacrylamide and methylene bismethacrylamide, diacrylates and dimethacrylates of mono-, di- and polyethylene glycols, allyl- and vinyl-functional (meth)acrylates and (meth)acrylamides, e.g. N-methyl allylacrylamide and N-vinyl acrylamide, and divinyl compounds, e.g. divinyl benzene. Examples of suitable monomeric branching agents containing one ethylenically unsaturated bond and one reactive group include glycidyl acrylate, methylol acrylamide and acrolein. Examples of branching agents containing two reactive groups include glyoxal, diepoxy compounds and epichlorohydrin.

The acrylamide-based polymer usually has a branching agent content of at least 4 molar parts per million, based on the initial monomer content used in the polymerization. Suitably the content is at least 8 and preferably at least 20 molar parts per million, based on the initial monomer content. The upper limit in respect of the branching agent content is suitably 200 and preferably 100 molar parts per million, based on the initial monomer content.

The polyacrylamide used in the process preferably has a cationic charge. Suitable cationic polyacrylamides have a cationicity of from 2 to 45 mole%, i.e., polymers prepared from 2 to 45 mole% of monomers which are cationic or rendered cationic during or after polymerization. Preferably, the cationicity is from 5 to 35 mole%.

The molecular weight of the acrylamide-based polymer is suitably above 500,000, preferably above 3,000,000. The upper limit is usually 30,000,000 and suitably 25,000,000.

The amount of acrylamide-based polymer added to the stock is usually at least 0.01 kg/tonne and the upper limit is usually 30 kg/tonne, calculated as dry polymer on dry fibres and optional fillers. The amount is suitably from 0.02 to 15 and preferably from 0.05 to 8 kg/tonne.

Aqueous aluminium-containing silica sols that can be used according to the present invention are known in the art. Preferably the sol contains anionic aluminium-modified silica particles, i.e. particles based on SiO_2 or silicic acid containing aluminium. It is further preferred that the particles are colloidal, i.e. in the colloidal range of particle size. The particles suitably have an average size of less than about 20 nm and preferably an average size within the range of from about 1 to 10 nm. As conventional in silica chemistry, the size refers to the average size of the primary particles, which may be aggregated or non-aggregated. Examples of suitable aluminium-containing silica sols include those disclosed in U.S. Pat. Nos. 4,927,498, 4,961,825, 4,980,025, 5,176,891, 5,368,833, 5,470,435, and 5,543,014, and European Pat. No. 656872, which are all incorporated herein by reference.

The particles present in the sol should suitably have a specific surface area of at least $50 \text{ m}^2/\text{g}$. The specific surface area can be measured by means of titration with NaOH in

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known manner, e.g. as described by Sears in Analytical Chemistry 28(1956):12, 1981-1983 and in U.S. Pat. No. 5,176,891. The given area thus represents the average specific surface area of the particles. Suitably, the specific surface area is at least 425 m²/g, preferably within the range of from 450 to 1700 m²/g and most preferably from 750 to 1000 m²/g.

5 Preferred aluminium-containing silica sols according to the invention include sols containing particles of colloidal aluminium-modified silica and preferably such silica particles which are surface-modified with aluminium. These particles are suitably modified with aluminium to a degree of from 2 to 25%, preferably from 3 to 20%, and hereby is meant the part of aluminium atoms which have replaced silicon atoms in the surface of the particles.

10 The degree of aluminium-modification is given in % and is calculated on the basis of 8 silanol groups per nm², as described by Iler, R.K. in Journal of Colloidal and Interface Science, 55(1976):1, 25-34.

According to a preferred embodiment of the invention, the aluminium-containing silica sol has an S-value in the range of from 8 to 45%, suitably from 10 to 40% and preferably from 15 to 35%. The S-value of a sol corresponds to the degree of aggregate or microgel formation and a lower S-value is indicative of a greater part of microgel. It is thus preferred that the sol used in the present process has a comparatively high content of microgel. It is assumed that the microgel, the aggregates, to a substantial extent is present in the form of two- or three-dimensional structures of aggregated primary particles. The S-value can be measured and calculated as described by R.K. Iler and R.L. Dalton in J. Phys. Chem. 60(1956), 955-957. Thus, in accordance with a particularly preferred embodiment of the invention, the sol used has an S-value in the range of from 8 to 45% and contains silica particles having a specific surface area in the range of from 750 to 1000 m²/g which are surface-modified with aluminium to a degree of from 2 to 25% substitution of silicon atoms.

25 Sols of this type are disclosed in U.S. Pat. No. 5,368,833.

According to another preferred embodiment of the invention, the sol used contains colloidal aluminium-modified silica with a high specific surface area, at least 1000 m²/g and suitably in the range of from 1000 to 1700 m²/g. In the art, aluminium-containing silicas of this type are also referred to as polyaluminosilicate or polyaluminosilicate microgel, which are both encompassed by the term aluminium-modified silica used herein.

30

The amount of aluminium-containing silica sol added to the suspension is usually at least 0.01 kg/tonne, often at least 0.05 kg/tonne, and the upper limit suitably is 5 kg/tonne, calculated as SiO₂ on dry fibres and optional fillers. The amount is preferably in the range of from 0.1 to 2 kg/tonne.

35 According to the invention it is preferred to add the acrylamide-based polymer to the stock before the aluminium-containing silica sol, even if the opposite order of addition may be

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useful. It is further preferred to add the first component, e.g. the polymer, before a shear stage, which can be selected for example from pumping, mixing, cleaning, etc., and to add the second component, e.g. the sol, after said shear stage. The present process further encompasses split additions, e.g. using at least two positions for adding the polymer and/or at least two positions for adding the aluminium-containing silica sol, preferably with a shear stage between each addition. The pH of the stock can be in the range from about 3 to about 10. The pH is suitably above 3.5 and preferably in the range of from 4 to 9.

In addition to the improvements observed in terms of formation, it has been found that improved sizing can be obtained when using a sizing agent in conjunction with the additives according to the invention over additives comprising non-branched acrylamide-based polymers. Hereby lower levels of sizing agent can be used to give the same sizing response as compared to prior art processes and the present method thus offers further economic benefits. The sizing agent can be derived from natural sources, e.g. rosin-based sizing agents, and from synthetic sources, e.g. cellulose-reactive sizing agents such as ketene dimers and acid anhydrides, or any combination thereof. The use of such sizing agents are well-known in the art. Examples of suitable rosin-based sizing agents, ketene dimers and acid anhydrides are disclosed in U.S. Pat. No. 4,522,686, which is incorporated herein by reference. In the present process, it is preferred to use cellulose-reactive sizing agents such as alkyl ketene dimers and alkenyl succinic anhydrides, most preferably alkyl ketene dimers.

When using a sizing agent in the process, the amount added to the suspension can be within the range of from 0.01 to 5.0% by weight and preferably from 0.02 to 1.0% by weight, calculated as dry on dry fibres and optional fillers, where the dosage is mainly dependent on the quality of the pulp, the sizing agent used and the level of sizing desired. The sizing agents are used in the form of aqueous dispersions containing at least one dispersing agent selected from anionic, nonionic, amphoteric and cationic dispersing agents. It is preferred that the aqueous dispersion is anionic or cationic. When being used in the process, the sizing agent, acrylamide-based polymer and aluminium-containing silica sol can be added to the stock in arbitrary order.

According to a preferred embodiment of the invention, use is made of at least one additional organic polymer which can be derived from natural or synthetic sources. Examples of suitable naturally derived polymers include starches and guar gums, e.g. cationic and amphoteric starches and cationic and amphoteric guar gums. Examples of suitable synthetic polymers include any polymer acting as an anionic trash catcher (ATC). ATC's are known in the art as neutralizing and/or fixation agents for detrimental anionic substances present in the stock. Hereby ATC's can enhance the efficiency of the components used in the process. Suitable ATC's include cationic organic polyelectrolytes, especially low molecular weight,

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highly charged, cationic organic polymers such as polyamines, polyethylene imines, homo- and copolymers based on diallyldimethyl ammonium chloride, (meth) acrylamides and (meth) acrylates. Even if an arbitrary order of addition can be used, it is preferred to add such additional polymers to the stock prior to the branched acrylamide-based polymer.

- 5 According to another preferred embodiment of the invention, the process further comprises adding to the stock an aluminium compound. As is known in the art when using cationic or amphoteric polymers in combination with aluminium-containing silica sols as retention and drainage aids, further improvements of their effect can be obtained by introducing an aluminium compound into the stock. Examples of suitable aluminium
- 10 compounds for this purpose include alum, aluminates, aluminium chloride, aluminium nitrate and polyaluminium compounds, such as polyaluminium chlorides, polyaluminium sulphates, polyaluminium compounds containing both chloride and sulphate ions, polyaluminium silicate-sulphates, and mixtures thereof. The polyaluminium compounds may also contain
- 15 other anions than chloride ions, for example anions from sulfuric acid, phosphoric acid, organic acids such as citric acid and oxalic acid.

- When using an aluminium compound in the process, the amount added to the suspension is dependent on the type of aluminium compound used and on other effects desired from it. It is for instance well-known in the art to utilize aluminium compounds as precipitants for rosin-based sizing agents, and polyaluminium compounds can also be used
- 20 as ATC's. The amount should suitably be at least 0.001 kg/tonne, calculated as Al_2O_3 on dry fibres and optional fillers. Suitably, the amount is in the range of from 0.01 to 1 kg/tonne, preferably in the range from 0.05 to 0.5 kg/tonne.

- Further additives which are conventional in papermaking can of course be used in combination with the additives according to the invention, such as for example dry strength
- 25 agents, wet strength agents, optical brightening agents, dyes, etc. The cellulosic suspension, or stock, can also contain mineral fillers of conventional types such as, for example, kaolin, china clay, titanium dioxide, gypsum, talc and natural and synthetic calcium carbonates such as chalk, ground marble and precipitated calcium carbonate.

- The process according to the invention is used for the production of paper. The term
- 30 paper as used herein of course include not only paper and the production thereof, but also other sheet or web-like products, such as for example board and paperboard, and the production thereof.

- The process according to the invention can be used in the production of paper from different types of suspensions of cellulose-containing fibres and the suspensions should suitably contain at least 25% by weight and preferably at least 50% by weight of such fibres,
- 35 based on dry substance. The suspensions can be based on fibres from chemical pulp such

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as sulphate, sulphite and organosolv pulps, mechanical pulp such as thermomechanical pulp, chemo-thermomechanical pulp, refiner pulp and groundwood pulp, from both hardwood and softwood, and can also be based on recycled fibres, optionally from de-inked pulps, and mixtures thereof.

5 The invention is further illustrated in the following Examples which, however, are not intended to limit the same. Parts and % relate to parts by weight and % by weight, respectively, unless otherwise stated.

Example 1

10 The process according to the invention was evaluated in terms of formation which was measured and calculated in accordance with the method described by S. Fröllich and K. Andersson in Svensk Papperstidning/Nordisk Cellulosa, 3(1995), 28-30 using a fibre optic sensor connected to a computer. In the method, the size, shape and density (porosity) of the flocs formed in the stock are analyzed and a floc index is calculated. The floc index corresponds to the formation of the paper produced and a lower floc index indicates a better
15 formation and improved paper quality, and vice versa.

 The stock used was based on 60:40 bleached birch/pine sulphate to which 0.3 g/l of $\text{Na}_2\text{SO}_4 \cdot 10\text{H}_2\text{O}$ was added. Stock consistency was 0.5% and pH 7.0. In the tests, use was made of various linear and branched cationic acrylamide-based polymers, all of which had a cationicity of 10 mole%, in conjunction with a sol of aluminium-modified silica of the type disclosed in U.S. Pat. No. 5,368,833 which had an S-value of about 25% and contained silica
20 particles with a specific surface area of about 900 m^2/g which were surface-modified with aluminium to a degree of 5%. In the tests according to the invention, use was made of a cationic branched polyacrylamide containing in polymerized form a monomer branching agent being methylene bisacrylamide. The content of branching agent was 50 molar parts per
25 million, based on initial monomer content, and this polymer is hereinafter referred to as PAM 50. In a comparative test, use was made of a conventional cationic linear polyacrylamide comprising no monomer acting as a branching agent. This polymer is hereinafter referred to as PAM 0.

 Additions of chemicals were made to a baffled jar at a constant stirring speed. The
30 sensor, CWF, available from Chemtronics, Sweden, was immersed in the jar and the stock was allowed to pass through the sensor at a constant flow rate while the floc index was measured and calculated. The tests were conducted as follows: i) adding acrylamide-based polymer to the stock followed by stirring for 30 seconds, ii) adding aluminium-modified silica sol to the stock followed by stirring for 15 seconds while measuring and calculating the floc
35 index. The calculated floc index is the average value obtained from 2 to 10 seconds following the sol addition. The results of the tests are set forth in Table I below.

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Table I

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Test no.	Sol dosage (kg/tonne)	PAM-0 dosage (kg/tonne)	PAM-50 dosage (kg/tonne)	Floc index
1	0.55	0.2		605
5 2	0.55	0.35		605
3	0.55	0.5		760
4	0.55	0.7		935
5	0.55	0.9		1305
6	0.55	1.05		1485
10 7	0.55	1.2		1625
8	0.55		0.2	420
9	0.55		0.35	435
10	0.55		0.5	615
11	0.55		0.7	875
15 12	0.55		0.9	915
13	0.55		1.05	1030
14	0.55		1.2	1080

As is evident from the table, the process according to the present invention using a branched polyacrylamide resulted in a substantially lower floc index, thereby indicating better formation and improved paper quality, as compared to the comparative process using a linear polyacrylamide.

Example 2

Retention properties of the processes of example 1 were evaluated by means of a Britt Dynamic Jar at 1000 rpm, which is the conventional test method for retention in the paper industry. The same types of stock, polyacrylamides, aluminium-modified silica sol and dosages as used in example 1 were used in these tests. Using the order of addition as defined above, the stock was drained 15 seconds following the sol addition for measuring the retention. The retention results obtained in the tests and the floc index values of example 1 were recorded by means of a computer, the data were plotted as floc index (y) against retention (x) and a curve was adapted to the data points; $y=16.6x^{0.95}$ and correlation $R^2=0.94$ for the process according to the invention; $y=13.4x^{1.04}$ and $R^2=0.94$ for the comparative process. The relations between retention and formation are further evident from table II.

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Table II

Retention (%)	Floc index	
	PAM-0	PAM-50
30	460	420
40	621	552
50	783	682
60	947	812
70	1112	940
80	1277	1067

- 10 Lower floc index values indicating better formation and improved paper quality were obtained with the process according to the invention over the comparative process at corresponding retention levels.

Example 3

- 15 The sizing efficiency of the process according to the invention was evaluated in this test. Paper sheets were prepared from the same stock as used in example 1 according to the standard method SCAN-C23X for laboratory scale. In addition to the additives used in example 1, use was made of a cationic branched polyacrylamide having a cationicity of 10% containing in polymerized form methylene bisacrylamide, the content of which was 25 molar parts per million, based on initial monomer content. This polymer is hereinafter referred to as
- 20 PAM 25. The sizing agent used was a cationic dispersion of alkyl ketene dimer.

- The order of addition were as follows: i) adding acrylamide-based polymer to the stock followed by stirring for 30 seconds, ii) adding ketene dimer to the stock followed by stirring for 15 seconds, iii) adding aluminium-modified silica sol to the stock followed by stirring for 15 seconds, and iv) draining the stock to form paper. The dosages were as
- 25 follows: 0.3 kg of polyacrylamide per tonne of dry stock, 0.8 kg of ketene dimer per tonne of dry stock, and 0.5 kg of silica-based sol, calculated as SiO₂ per tonne of dry stock.

- The sizing efficiency was evaluated by means of the Hercules Size Test (HST) with test solution no. 2 (1% formic acid) to 85% reflectance. The process according to the invention using the branched polyacrylamides PAM 25 and PAM 50 resulted in HST values being
- 30 60% and 90% higher, respectively, as compared to the HST value obtained with the comparative process using the linear polyacrylamide.

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Claims

1. A process for the production of paper from a suspension of cellulose containing fibres, and optional fillers, wherein an acrylamide-based polymer and an anionic aluminium-containing silica sol are added to the suspension and the suspension is formed and drained
5 on a wire, characterised in that the acrylamide-based polymer is a water-soluble, cationic or amphoteric, branched acrylamide-based polymer.
2. A process according to claim 1, characterised in that the acrylamide-based polymer contains a difunctional branching agent.
3. A process according to claim 1 or 2, characterised in that the acrylamide-
10 based polymer contains in polymerized form a branching agent selected from alkylene bis(meth)acrylamides, di(meth)acrylates of mono-, di- and polyethylene glycols, allyl- and vinyl-functional (meth)acrylates and (meth) acrylamides, or divinyl compounds.
4. A process according to claim 1, 2 or 3, characterised in that the acrylamide-based polymer has a branching agent content of from 8 to 100 molar parts per million,
15 based on initial monomer content.
5. A process according to any one of the preceding claims, characterised in that the acrylamide-based polymer has a molecular weight of at least 3,000,000.
6. A process according to any one of the preceding claims, characterised in that the acrylamide-based polymer is a cationic polymer.
- 20 7. A process according to any of the preceding claims, characterised in that the acrylamide-based polymer and a sol containing anionic aluminium-modified silica particles having an average size within the range of from about 1 to about 10 nm are added to the suspension.
8. A process according to claim 1 or 7, characterised in that the sol contains
25 particles having a specific surface area of at least 425 m²/g.
9. A process according to claim 1, 7 or 8, characterised in that the sol has an S-value in the range of from 8 to 45% and contains particles with a specific surface area within the range of from 750 to 1000 m²/g.
10. A process according to any one of the preceding claims, characterised
30 in that it comprises adding a sizing agent to the suspension
11. A process according to claim 10, characterised in that the sizing agent is a ketene dimer.

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
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A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC6: D21H 17/45, D21H 21/10

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

IPC6: D21H

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

SE,DK,FI,NO classes as above

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)

CLAIMS, JAPIO, PAPERCHEM, WPI

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	Dialog Information Services, file 240, PAPERCHEM, Dialog accession no. 0597465, Paperchem accession no. 66-17465, Shin, J. H. et al: "Application of Highly Branched Polymer to the Microparticle Retention Systems"; & J. TAPPIK 27, no. 2: 16-22 (1995) --	1-11
X	US 5393381 A (RENE HUND ET AL), 28 February 1995 (28.02.95) --	1-11
A	EP 0374458 A2 (AMERICAN CYANAMID COMPANY), 27 June 1990 (27.06.90), claim 1-2, page 6, lines 37-40 --	1-11

☒ Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.☒ See patent family annex.

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International application No.

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